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**Civil Society and the Question of Palestine**

<https://www.un.org/unispal/ngo-action-news-12-december-2019/>

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**12 December 2019**

**Middle East**

* On 11 December, [BADIL – Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights](http://www.badil.org/en/publication/press-releases/90-2019/5024-pr-en111219-61.html) unveiled its “Survey of Palestinian Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons 2016-2018”. The event was attended by representatives from various community-based organisations, diplomatic missions, international organisations, academics and young activists. BADIL’s findings were that, since the last survey, Palestinians had suffered from a rapid advancement of Israeli annexation policies in the West Bank, “underpinned by entrenched apartheid policies […], coupled with the renewed attacks on the rights of Palestinian refugees, particularly in the delegitimization of UNRWA.”
* On 11 December, [Gisha – Legal Centre for Freedom of Movement](https://gisha.org/updates/10609) issued a press release stating that despite of the upcoming holidays and repeated reminders, the Israeli Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) is yet to publish the permit quotas to allow Christian residents of Gaza to reunite with their families in the West Bank and Israel and to visit the holy sites in Bethlehem, Nazareth and Jerusalem. Gisha reiterated that the rights to freedom of movement, family life and freedom of worship were universal and “yet Israel continues to frame the exit permits it gives during the holidays not as a right but as a ‘gesture of goodwill’.”
* On 10 December, [B’Tselem](https://www.btselem.org/30-years/#/en/what-lies-ahead) published “Just the Tip of the Iceberg: One victim a Year. Times Thirty Years” to mark 30 years since its founding in 1989. This publication is a collection of testimonies documenting cases in which soldiers killed, wounded and beat Palestinians. B’Tselem selected one incident from each year since its founding and went back to the victims and their families to learn about how their lives were affected.
* On 10 December, on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day [Adalah – The Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel](https://www.adalah.org/uploads/uploads/Adalah_Position_Paper_Refugee_Displacement_Camps_December_2019.pdf) released a new report exposing Israel’s plans to evict Palestinian Bedouins in the Negev from their homes. The position paper explains the ramifications of the plans and the ways in which they violate the Bedouin community’s human rights.
* On 10 December, on the occasion of the International Human Rights Day, [Addameer – Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association](http://www.addameer.org/news/international-human-rights-day-palestinian-peoples-suffering-continues) issued a press release to denounce the Israeli policies which include extrajudicial executions and issuance of discriminatory legislation, mass arrest campaigns, torture, administrative detention and medical negligence against Palestinian political prisoners. Addameer called on UN Member States and UN bodies and agencies to hold Israel accountable for its ongoing violations against the Palestinians living in the occupied territory.
* On 10 December, to mark International Human Rights Day, [Gisha – Legal centre for Freedom of Movement](https://gisha.org/publication/10596) released a new clip “If Only”, exploring what freedom of movement means to young people in Gaza, having them saying what they would do if they had it and what life in Gaza could look like without severe access restrictions.
* On 6 December, [Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights](http://www.mezan.org/en/post/23647/Five%2BYears%2Band%2BWaiting%3A%2BNo%2BInvestigation%2Bin%2Bthe%2BReport%2Bof%2Bthe%2BOffice%2Bof%2Bthe%2BProsecutor%2Bon%2BPreliminary%2BExaminations%2B2019%2B) issued a press release denouncing the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court’s release of an advance report  on Preliminary Examinations. The report includes a six-page section on the situation of Palestine. Al Mezan criticized the report for containing “a number of unwarranted and disturbing omissions, including the exclusion of the Gaza Strip from territories occupied since 1967.” Al Mezan also highlighted that the report failed to mention “Israel’s unlawful extension of sovereignty over Jerusalem in 1980 […].” Also, the organization criticized that both Israel and Palestine are unjustifiably treated as two equal parties to an ongoing conflict, throughout the report.
* On 2 December, [Al-Haq, BADIL – Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights, Al Mezan Centre for Human Rights, Civic Coalition for Palestinian Rights in Jerusalem, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies and others](http://www.alhaq.org/advocacy/16266.html) delivered a joint statement at the 100th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) during the review of Israel. The NGOs denounced Israel’s “institutionalised regime of systematic oppression and domination”, mentioning the 2018 ‘Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People’ as entrenching “Israel’s apartheid regime in the State’s constitutional legal foundations.” Among the recommendations to the Committee, the NGOs urged to recognise and declare that Israel’s discriminatory laws, policies and practices had established an “apartheid regime”.

**Europe**

* On 10 December, [Lawyers for Palestinian Human Rights (LPHR)](https://lphr.org.uk/latest-news/lphr-files-oecd-guidelines-complaint-against-jcb-for-involvement-in-human-rights-breaches-in-the-occupied-palestinian-territory/) filed a human rights complaint against JCB (J.C. Bamford Excavators Ltd.), a world-leading construction equipment company headquartered in the United Kingdom, to the UK National Contact Point for the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. LPHR provided evidence that JCB products were used in demolitions relating to incidents in ten villages or areas in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) between 2016 and 2019. Based on this evidence, LPHR argued that vulnerable Palestinian Bedouin communities in Area C of the West Bank are frequently affected by demolitions and displacement and that JCB was in breach of human rights responsibilities under the OECD Guidelines.
* On 3 December, the [Palestinian Return Centre (PRC)](https://prc.org.uk/en/post/4147/prc-concludes-successful-conference-on-unrwa), in partnership with Al Jazeera Centre for Studies and the European Centre for Palestine Studies at the University of Exeter, concluded the one-day conference “UNRWA at 70: Responding to Crises and Building a Just Future”. PRC hailed the 170 Member States who had voted in favour of the renewal of UNRWA’s term of office, “despite the ad hominem campaigns waged by the US and Israel to rescind the Agency’s mandate.”

**North America**

* On 10 December, [The Jerusalem Fund for Education and Community Development](https://www.thejerusalemfund.org/events/upcoming/south-hebron-hills-nonviolent-resistance-and-cross-border-organizing) hosted Cody O’Rourke, co-founder of the “Good Shepherd Collective”, a grassroot organization based in the Palestinian Bedouin village of Umm al-Khair in the West Bank. O’Rourke discussed the work of the organization focused on home demolitions and forced displacement of Palestinians and denounced the support of US aid to Israeli settler organisations.
* On 10 December, [Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP)](https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/trump-antisemitism-eo/) issued a press release criticizing the US President’s recent order to allow his Government to withhold funds from university campuses deemed to promote “Anti-Semitism and Israeli boycotts”. JVP denounced this Executive Order as a “culmination of decades of attempts by anti-Palestinian organizations to suppress Palestinian organizing, advocacy, research and teaching on college campuses” that “would codify a dangerous and overly broad definition of antisemitism into federal civil rights law” without “offer[ing] any protection to Jewish students” and instead would “usher in a climate of fear on college campuses, where university administrations will be incentivized to silence student activism, faculty research, and teaching about Palestine[.]”
* On 8 December, the [Institute for Palestine Studies](https://palestinesquare.com/2019/12/08/roundtable-on-unrwas-contemporary-role/) organised a roundtable on “UNRWA’s Contemporary Role”. The roundtable gathered legal experts to reflect on UNRWA’s role in an era of uncertainty surrounding the question of Palestine refugees and following a challenging year for the Agency’s relationship with the international community in the wake of its funding crisis, concern over the mandate renewal and most recently, the resignation of its Commissioner-General.

**United Nations**

* On 10 December, [UNRWA](https://www.unrwa.org/newsroom/press-releases/unrwa-marks-70-years-service-palestine-refugees) marked 70 years of service for Palestine refugees, stating that “[w]hile the 70th Anniversary of UNRWA provides an occasion for sober reflection on Palestinian exile, it also affords a moment to consider the contribution that the Agency’s programmes have made to the lives of generations” of Palestine refugees. UNRWA shared a virtual photo-book “UNRWA@70” showcasing UNRWA service delivery and the daily lives and historic moments of Palestine refugees throughout the decades.
* On 3 December, the [UN General Assembly](https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/ga12220.doc.htm) adopted five resolutions ([A/RES/74/10](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/ga-mandated-committee-on-the-exercise-of-the-inalienable-rights-of-the-palestinian-people-ga-resolution-a-res-74-10/); [A/RES/74/11](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/peaceful-settlement-of-the-question-of-palestine-ga-resolution-a-res-74-11/); [A/RES/74/12](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/division-for-palestinian-rights-ga-resolution-a-res-74-12/); [A/RES/74/13](https://www.un.org/unispal/document/special-information-programme-on-question-of-palestine-of-the-department-of-global-communications-of-the-un-secretariat-ga-resolution-a-res-74-13/) and [A/C.2/74/L.45](https://undocs.org/A/C.2/74/L.45)) on the question of Palestine and the Middle East, including one calling on Member States not to recognize any changes to the pre-1967 borders, including with regards to Jerusalem, other than those agreed by the parties through negotiations. Among these resolutions, the Assembly adopted by recorded vote two dealing with the UN system’s own provision of support to the Palestinian people. The first – titled “Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People” – requested the Committee to exert all efforts to promote the Palestinians’ right to self-determination. In the second resolution “Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat”, the Assembly requested the Division to continue to monitor developments relevant to the question of Palestine among other activities.

*This newsletter informs about recent and upcoming activities of Civil Society Organizations affiliated with the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. The Committee and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the UN Secretariat provide the information “as is” without warranty of any* kind, *and do not accept any responsibility or liability for the accuracy, or reliability of the information contained in the websites linked in the newsletter.*